Our Offering

Some Notes on the Liturgy

by LOREN GAVITT

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Our Offering—*Some Notes on The Liturgy*, by the Rev'd LOREN N. GAVITT

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FOREWORD

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH today is in the midst of a widespread liturgical development. On all sides, various devotions and practices are being tried out in actual use. This makes for wide divergencies in services from place to place and these divergencies are especially noticeable in the Eucharistic liturgy.[1] While it causes considerable confusion and misunderstanding, it is inevitable that the development should be in progress at this particular time among us for, no matter how much official legislation may be passed, no liturgy can ever be a settled matter until it has grown out of the devotional life of the people who use it. The Eucharistic liturgy of our Book of Common Prayer has heretofore had little opportunity to fit itself into the life of Anglicanism because, until little over a century ago, it was seldom used more than once a month. With the return of the Holy Sacrifice to weekly and daily use, a development began which is still going on and which will inevitably continue until the liturgy is conformed to the needs of the Christians who use it day by day.

In parishes which are known as "Catholic" among us, this development has taken a very definite form all over the Anglican Communion. The fact that its details are so surprisingly uniform in widely separated parishes, points

[1] For example, many of the practices explained in the body of this study are not the use of the Order of the Holy Cross.

to the fact that, when the development is complete, this is more or less what the liturgy will be.

This little study is an attempt to trace the historical background of the various elements of the rite in order that the average layman may understand something of the reasons why things are today being done as they are. Those who have had the opportunity of studying that monumental work on the liturgy by Dom Gregory Dix, called "The Shape of the Liturgy," will recognize how completely this tract is dependent for facts upon this great volume. This writer, however, is himself responsible for most of the deductions which are contained in this tract and is far from intending to shift that responsibility to anyone else. The Eucharistic liturgy today appears among us in a certain form which is, in many places, different from the rite in the Prayer Book. Why is this? Here is the reason as it appears to this writer.

OUR OFFERING

Some Notes on the Liturgy

1. INTRODUCTION

IT IS ESSENTIAL to any understanding of the liturgy that we see clearly the Mass (or Eucharist, or Holy Communion, or the Lord's Supper) to be fundamentally an action. It is the action whereby the Christian Church offers the sacrificial life and death of Christ to the Eternal Father.

It would take us too far afield here to go into the difficult subject of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. It is important, however, for us to realize that, from the earliest days of Christianity, every baptized person conceived it to be his fundamental duty as a member of Christ, to participate in this offering at least on every Lord's Day. Even when the Roman government passed laws which carried the death penalty for assisting in this offering, Christians calmly took their lives in their hands every Sunday and went to Mass. Many thousands were caught and executed, yet Christians persisted in performing this action which they believed to be of the very essence of their lives as baptized souls.

This action, which was to prove so fatal to life for some 250 years, was instituted and prescribed by the Saviour in almost his last hour of freedom. He took bread and wine, blessed them, gave thanks, broke the bread, and gave both to the Apostles. Then he added the solemn command, "Do this."

We have the barest record of words spoken in connection with this act and our Lord did not command any particular set of prayers to accompany it. What he did command was that what he had done be repeated. So, because this action was commanded by Christ himself, the early Christians continued to perform it regularly, frequently and faithfully in spite of all the world could do to stop it. (Incidentally, it is a sorry fact that what the enemies of Christ could not accomplish, has been widely effected by Christians themselves and today we see great areas of Christianity where other services are substituted for the action commanded by Christ, and Christians who can fail to participate in this action without any consciousness that they are being disloyal to Christ.)

One of the most remarkable things about the history of the Mass is that, no matter where one looks for evidence, among widely separated groups of Christians of very different cultures, this action, which has always been primary and habitual, has invariably consisted of four things:

1. Taking the bread and wine;
2. Giving thanks and praying over them;
3. Breaking the bread;
4. Receiving the Holy Gifts.

From the very beginning, of course, forms of prayers and devotions surrounded these actions, but these varied considerably from place to place, while the actions themselves remained always the same. An Apostle (or later, his successor, a Bishop) always led the action and at first he seems to have made up his own prayers. As time went on, and the action was repeated so often and so regularly, the

prayers and devotions tended to become stereotyped and finally they developed into set services called "rites" or "liturgies." But these rites were simply set prayers surrounding the old four-fold action.

It is what is done at the altar that is of primary importance, not what is said. Church people today, with their very bad tradition of worship as hearing something, seem to have great difficulty in understanding this fact. But if we are to know anything about the Mass, we must first be entirely clear that the Mass is fundamentally not something said or listened to, but something done.

The four-fold action never changed, but the services, or rites, have always been changing and developing, accommodating themselves to the life of the Church. In some places, notably in the group of churches known as "Eastern Orthodox," there has been almost no development for some thousand years. But in the West the rite has been steadily growing and developing. Many older elements tended to be shortened or eliminated. Prayers and devotions of one community were borrowed by others, found suitable and became universal. New devotions were tried out in use, found unsuitable and dropped.

The "Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion" in our Book of Common Prayer, is the rite which the American Episcopal Church provides for the performance of the traditional four-fold action of Christianity. It is one of a family of rites in use in the Anglican Communion which are all based upon the rite which appeared in the first English Prayer Book of 1549. Since the rite was first translated into English, the various provinces of Anglicanism have been adapting this

original English rite and it is still in the process of development.

Almost no one, of any brand of Churchmanship, finds the rite exactly as it stands in the Prayer Book, an entirely suitable accompaniment for the old four-fold action and, at the present time, our rite is being developed in the life of the Church by additions (as psalms and hymns), by omissions (as the Ten Commandments), and rearrangements (as the moving of the "Glory be to God on high"). It is perhaps confusing to people to find the rite varying from place to place, but this is the way in which rites have grown in the 2000 years of Christianity. It is the only way in which an entirely suitable rite can be built up.

The main thing to remember, then, is that the Mass is an action performed, not a set of various devotions said or sung, and listened to. From the earliest days of Christianity. this action, commanded by Christ himself, has been the very center of the life of the Christian Church and has had a four-fold shape. When it is performed by the members of the Body of Christ, the redeeming power of the Saviour is made active in the world and Christians, who have their part in the action, participate thereby in the extension of Christ's redemption to all mankind.

2. THE TWO PARTS OF THE RITE

EVEN A CASUAL observer at Mass will notice that the rite has two distinct parts which seem to have little relation to one another. When the celebrant first enters the sanctuary, none of the articles necessary to the perform-

ance of the Eucharistic action is in sight. He stands, most of the time, at one side, reading various things from the book. If Mass is sung, he leaves the altar entirely at least twice and sits while the people are singing. When a Bishop celebrates solemnly, this first part of the rite takes place at his throne, not at the altar at all. Indeed, this part of the rite could quite properly be said by anyone in a place where there was no altar, as long as he had the book.

Then, quite abruptly, the whole atmosphere changes. The necessary vessels appear from under their veils, and the celebrant, at the center of the altar, proceeds to do the four things which, as we have seen, constitute the action commanded by Christ, whereby his saving Sacrifice is offered. For this part of the rite, an altar with its appurtenances, and a minister of the Apostolic line, are an absolute necessity.

The fact is that these two elements of the rite were originally two distinct services which have been fused into a single act of worship. The first part is called traditionally, "the Mass of the Catechumens," the second part, "the Mass of the Faithful."

In the early days, every church had a large group of converts from paganism and heathenism who were under instruction for baptism. They were called "catechumens" (catechism-learners). According to the discipline of the time, no unbaptized person was ever allowed even to witness the offering of the Christian Sacrifice and there were officers of the congregation (doorkeepers) whose duty it was to make sure that only baptized souls (the faithful) were present before a Mass began. It was obviously

necessary to supply some sort of an appropriate act of worship for the catechumens, however, and a service developed along the lines of the old Jewish synagogue worship, which was largely made up of scripture reading, psalms and instruction.

Originally this service seems to have taken place quite apart from the time of Mass. But before long the two became joined. The catechumens assembled in the church with the faithful and their service was held first. Then the catechumens left the church and the actual offering began. To this day in some of the Eastern rites, which as we have seen have undergone almost no development since early days, the deacon makes an announcement before the second part of the rite begins, that all but the faithful are to depart—although all are expected to remain under present-day discipline.

So today's Mass rite is made up of these two parts which are still called the Mass of the Catechumens and the Mass of the Faithful. The characteristic object of the first part is the book and, in our rite, this part closes with the sermon (or the creed if there is no sermon). The characteristic object of the second part is the cup and this part begins with the first act of the four-fold action—the offering of the bread and wine.

3. THE PREPARATION

THE MASS RITE comes to us out of the religious experience of Christians through the ages. If some one person had written it, it would reflect only his own experience. Be-

cause millions have had a part in its development, it expresses all the various elements of worship. This is especially noteworthy in the first of the devotions of the rite—the preparation at the foot of the altar—which is one of the latest developments in the Western liturgy. It is an expression of the awe and reverence with which man must approach his God.

The celebrant, having prepared his heart by prayer and his body by fasting from the previous midnight, clothes himself in the traditional Mass vestments, which serve to obscure his individual personality. All priests and bishops traditionally wear the same vestments at the altar for, whether learned or stupid, renowned or unknown, liked or disliked, the celebrant is always the same thing. He is merely the instrument through which Christ offers his Sacrifice in the midst of the world. Thus prepared and clothed, the priest approaches the altar. But, instead of immediately ascending its steps, he pauses at the foot and conducts a little service of preparation. We cannot stroll thoughtlessly into worship. God must be approached with awe, reverence, and humility.

Our Prayer Book rite is based on the Roman rite as it was used in England in the sixteenth century. This is a bit before the preparation, as we know it today, had come into general use. However, the so-called "Collect for Purity," which is the first prayer printed in the Prayer Book rite, is a remnant of the old English prayers of preparation before Mass. It points to some sort of preparatory devotion, and everywhere in Anglicanism it is a growing custom to prefix the traditional preparation to this prayer.

The preparation consists of Psalm 43, a formula of confession of sin, and some versicles and responses. Psalm 43 is an inspired choice here, for it expresses all the reverent fear with which man should approach the "altar of God" as well as a childlike confidence in God's mercy. It also expresses the determination which overrides all those obstacles which man's enemies put in the way of his worship of God. Without this determination man cannot engage in worship. (During Passiontide and at Requiems, the psalm is not a part of the preparation. This points to a probability that the psalm was added some time after the preparation became a part of the rite. It never came to be added to the preparation in these cases.)

The psalm is followed by an old form of confession of sin, said by the celebrant and then by the people who are to participate in the offering. Sin separates from God. Confession opens the heart to his mercy. If we are to be honest in our approach to him, we must come with open acknowledgment of sin on our lips. In this formula, the priest and people confess not only to God, but also to the saints, the angels and men for, if we may believe Holy Scripture, heaven itself is affected by our sins. Because we are all one body in Christ, all members suffer when one member is hurt by sinning. It is a serious mistake to suppose that we can sin without hurting anyone but ourselves and the form of confession used here expresses the deep truth in this regard.

Having expressed reverence, confidence, determination and a sense of unworthiness, a set of versicles and responses leads to the Prayer Book Collect for Purity in which we pray that the Holy Ghost will purify our minds

so that we may worship worthily. This ends the little service of preparation and, praying silently that he and the faithful may be purified and thus rendered worthy to enter the "holy of holies," the celebrant ascends the steps of the altar.

4. THE INTROIT

As THE CELEBRANT arrives at the altar, he bows over and kisses it. The altar symbolizes Christ and is always the object of acts of reverence. Here, at High Mass, incense is blessed and the altar and celebrant are incensed. The rising smoke of the incense represents our ascending prayer and its sweet smell reminds us of the living beauty of Christ. Too, Christianity seeks to include all of our senses in worship, the sense of smell no less than the senses of hearing and seeing. Of all the customs of the Church, the use of the incense in worship is at once the most ancient and the most Biblical. Incense is used four times during the course of High Mass.

Now the celebrant goes to the side of the altar and reads the Introit. Originally the Introit was the processional psalm, sung while the celebrant and his attendants approached the altar. According to very early custom, the psalm ended with "Glory be to the Father, &c." and was preceded and followed by a verse called an "antiphon." The Western shortening process, which we have already noted, has had considerable effect upon the Introit for, in process of time, all but the first verse of the psalm has disappeared, so that the Introit today consists only of the

antiphon verse, the first verse of the psalm, the "Glory be," and the antiphon verse repeated.

At Masses which are sung, it is usual for the people to begin singing the Introit when the celebrant reaches the foot of the altar so that, while it is being sung, the celebrant conducts the preparation with its Collect for Purity, incenses the altar and reads the Introit privately. Sometimes, where the people are not able to sing the proper Introit, some other hymn is substituted.

The Prayer Book has a very curious liturgical innovation here. Instead of the ancient psalm, which varies with the day or feast, the Prayer Book prints here what is commonly known among us as "The Summary of the Law." ("Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith, &c.") Such an invariable substitute for the Introit has never had a place in any of the ancient rites. Its rubric indicates that the Summary is to be used here when the reading of the Ten Commandments at the beginning of the rite (see the next instruction) is omitted. The reading of the Commandments has almost entirely developed out of use everywhere among us. The logical next step in the development of our rite is to return to universal usage and drop all reference to commandments here. This is what is happening today. In more and more places, the ancient variable Introit psalm is read or sung in this place and the invariable Prayer Book Introit, the Summary of the Law, is disappearing.

Masses often get their names from the first word of the Introit. The reason why a Mass for the departed is called a "Requiem," for instance, is that "Requiem" is the first word of the Introit of all such Masses in the Latin.

The Introit is the text of the Mass somewhat as a sentence of Scripture is the text of a sermon. Listen to it and let it set your thoughts during the unfolding of the rest of the liturgy.

5. THE KYRIE ELEISON

The processional psalm (the Introit) having been completed, the Kyrie eleison is said or sung. Here we have one of the most interesting illustrations of the manner in which the Mass rite was shortened in the Western Church. In the early centuries (and even today in the Eastern Churches) as soon as the procession had reached the altar, a litany was said or sung. This litany was one of the special features of the deacon's part in the liturgy. He sang the short petitions and the people made the response, "Lord, have mercy," to each petition.

Sometime in the seventh century, it became the custom to omit this litany on certain days. When this was done, the people still sang their old responses even though the petitions were not used. This occasional practice became more general, until the old petitions were forgotten and the responses were all that was left of the old litany. The number of repetitions seems to have been fixed very early so that "Lord, have mercy" was repeated thrice, "Christ, have mercy" thrice, and again "Lord, have mercy" thrice. This is our custom today.

The earliest Mass rites were invariably in the Greek language, in which the New Testament was written, and which was the universal language of culture. When

Christianity spread to Rome, where the people spoke Latin, it was not long before Mass began to be said in that language. (The Roman Church has never changed from this use and still says the liturgy in the language into which it was originally translated because the people understood it.) These responses to the old litany, however, together with the music to which they were sung, seem to have been so familiar to the people that they were never translated out of the Greek and are still said in that language all over Christendom, no matter what the language of the rest of the rite. Although our Prayer Book has them in English, it is a growing custom among us to use the original Greek. The pronunciation (Kee'-ree-ay ay-lay'-ee-sohn, Kree'-stay ay-lay'-ee-sohn) is not difficult and, in common with Christians all over the world, we say Kyrie in its original language, just as we say "amen" and "alleluia" in the original Hebrew without translation.

The second English Prayer Book (1552) tried a liturgical experiment in regard to the Kyrie which was unknown in any traditional rite in Christendom. The experiment passed into later Prayer Books, but has been slowly developing out of use among us. At this point in the rite, the Ten Commandments were to be read to the people and, after each one, the people responded in an adapted form of the old Kyrie. The idea behind the experiment was that of self-examination. So the rubric still says that, when the commandment is read, the people "shall . . . ask God mercy for their transgressions for the time past." Actually few people are able to make a very searching self-examination on the Commandments by this method and there has always been an air of unreality about this de-

votion. Although the old rubric required that the Commandments be used at least once each Sunday, they had come to be so generally omitted in common use, that when the American Book of 1928 appeared, the rubric was changed and now requires that the Commandments be said only "at least one Sunday in each month." Today we find the Commandments very seldom used anywhere and it is practically certain that they will disappear entirely when another revision of the Prayer Book is made. Thus we see how rites develop. Experiments are tried freely, but when some experiment, after being tried out in actual use, is found to be unsuitable, it tends to drop out. When it is no longer in common use, the authorities seal the development by removing it entirely.

In prayer and worship, two beings are brought together: God the Almighty, and Man, a creature who lives only because God gives to him. So, early in the Mass, we throw ourselves entirely upon God. We do not demand rights. We do not press any claims. We simply cry out, in an oft-repeated plea, that God will have mercy upon us.

6. THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

In the earliest rites of which we have knowledge, the entrance psalm (Introit) is followed immediately by the Scripture lessons. The reason for this seems to be that the catechumens were not originally allowed to join in prayer with the faithful and thus the part of the rite which they attended never had forms of prayer. Very early, however, this restriction broke down and the deacon's litany,

of which our Kyrie is the remnant, came to be a normal part of the Mass of the Catechumens. In the East this litany was always completed by a traditional hymn called "Trisagion" or the "Hymn of the Angels."

The Western rite, although it had borrowed the litany from the East, seems to have been somewhat reluctant to take the hymn with it but, around 500 A. D., the hymn "Glory be to God on high" came to be used here with very rigid restrictions. A priest could use it only on Easter and on the anniversary of his ordination. If a bishop was celebrant, the hymn was added "on every Sunday and martyr's day." Priests, however, seem quite generally to have "broken the rubrics" and gone ahead using the Gloria regularly in spite of official rulings. By the eleventh century the Gloria was in such common use everywhere in the West that officialdom capitulated and ordered that priests as well as bishops might add the hymn to the rite on all feasts and on all Sundays outside of Advent and Lent.

We do not know why the West chose the Gloria instead of the Eastern Trisagion, but the former was not a new composition. It is found as early as 363 A. D. and was used in the East as the "Hymn at Dawn" in the office corresponding to our Morning Prayer. It will be noted that the West never made the hymn an integral part of the rite, but adopted it only as a sort of decoration to elaborate the liturgy on festivals. Thus it is technically improper to speak of "omitting" the Gloria. Rather, the hymn is added to the rite on occasions of joy.

The Gloria is pre-eminently one of the elements of our Prayer Book rite which is involved in the process of de-

velopment today. When the first English Prayer Book was issued in 1549, this hymn appeared in its normal place after the Kyrie and thus the English rite corresponded with every rite in Christendom by having an "Angel's Hymn" after the litany. When the second English Prayer Book appeared, however, the Gloria had been moved to the very end of the rite just before the blessing. Many have attempted to justify this position of the hymn, but actually there is no discernible reason for the change. At the end it disrupts the whole flow of the liturgical action and acts as an anticlimax after the Eucharistic action is entirely complete.

The unsuitability of the Gloria in the Prayer Book position seems to be felt instinctively by all schools of thought among us today and the hymn is being affected, in general use, in two ways. Its rubric in the Prayer Book allows for the substitution of "some proper Hymn" in this place and, in many parishes, a shorter, quieter hymn is almost invariably used here. Thus in wide areas of Anglicanism, the Gloria is almost never heard even on great feasts. In other parishes it is moved to its traditional place after the Kyrie on the days when ancient custom decrees that it be part of the rite. At the moment, there is a question as to which development will win out. In the end, by official action, either the Gloria will disappear entirely from our rite, or else it will be ordered in the place where it traditionally belongs. At any rate, the general use of the Gloria crept into the Western rite only because priests ignored official decrees on the subject. As rites develop, authority has little power over popular feeling of what is appropriate. General use invariably comes first. Then, when a

custom has become settled, official approval always follows.

So, when it is a feast, our repeated cries for mercy in the Kyrie, are followed by a burst of praise in the Gloria. The fact which was heralded by the Angels in the opening words of the Gloria, that God has come to earth in our nature, is God's answer to our plea. God's mercy is operative and we lift our voices in praise and thanksgiving.

7. THE COLLECT

We have noticed that, as long as the unbaptized were barred from any real participation in public worship, the processional psalm was immediately followed in the Eucharistic rite by the Scripture lessons. In the year 340 A. D. the Edict of the Emperor Constantine revoked all legislation against Christianity. This meant that the Church was no longer an embattled community in a hostile, heathen world. Christianity became lawful and the world at large began to turn to the Church. When that happened, the old restrictions regarding the unbaptized began to break down and this, in turn, affected the Mass rite. Whereas the first part of the rite had been largely for the instruction of those who were preparing for baptism, it now began to need adaptation to public worship and, as we have seen, the deacon's litany (the forerunner of our Kyrie) and its attendant "Angel's Hymn," were incorporated into this part of the rite. Thus we see how the Eucharistic rite has always developed by adapting itself to the conditions under which Christians live.

There was one more item in this process of development in the beginning of the Mass of the Catechumens; *viz.* the collect or prayer. Like most of these developments, the collect first appeared in the Eastern Church and was later borrowed by the West. In borrowing, however, the West made a significant change. The Eastern rites had put an unvarying prayer here and this is still the Eastern custom. When the West copied the usage, the prayer was a variable one and, before long, a proper collect was provided for each Sunday and feast. It was called "collect" for one of two reasons: either from the fact that it was originally said when the people first gathered (or collected) or because it gathered up (or collected) the petitions of all the people and united them with the celebrant's own in one prayer.

The Western collect is an ideal form of prayer, putting into the tersest kind of language the mightiest of truths and the deepest aspirations of the human heart. Most of the Prayer Book collects were Archbishop Cranmer's unparalleled translations of the ancient Roman Mass prayers whose composers are unknown. Their beautiful directness can be seen if a collect like that for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity is compared with more modern compositions. (*Eg.* The "Prayer of Thanksgiving" on page 83 of the Prayer Book, which is a prayer of Cranmer's own composition, rather than a translation of an ancient collect.) Except on feasts, other collects are usually added to the proper collect of the day.

Before the collect, the celebrant turns to the people and greets them with the salutation: "The Lord be with you," to which the people respond: "And with thy spirit." This mutual greeting appears eight times in the traditional

Western rite, each time before some important element of the service. Its use is as old as the Eucharist itself and should remind us that the Eucharist is always a corporate action of priest and people. The notion that worship consists in people listening to, or watching priest, acolytes and choir, has no justification in the Eucharistic rite. The congregation does not constitute an audience, but active participants in the whole course of the service. So the priest never begins any important part of the rite without first, by means of this age-old formula, bidding the people to participate. (Notice that the priest addresses "you," which in the old English of the Prayer Book language is always plural. When the people respond, they use the word "thy," which is the singular form of the pronoun.)

When you hear the greeting, always make the response whether it is said or sung, and let it always be a reminder to you that an important act is to follow, to which you are to pay close attention and in which you are to participate by the devotion of your heart.

At the end of the collect, the people are directed to say, "Amen." This is a Hebrew verb meaning "to be firm." While the priest alone reads the collect, it is the prayer of all, and this word, spoken by all at the end, marks the individual's personal appropriation of the sentiments expressed. Like the greeting, the "Amen" is a part of the Mass rite assigned to the people. Never neglect to say or sing it—and in an audible tone. There is no more reason for the people to "say" their part of the rite inaudibly than there is for the priest to say his part in the same way. And the careless "gabbling" of responses is no more excusable than a carelessly, hurriedly-pronounced prayer would be.

8. THE SCRIPTURE LESSONS

IT HAS BEEN noticed that the first part of the rite originated in the discipline of the early Church, which barred all but the baptized from participation in the offering of the Christian Sacrifice. Those under instruction for baptism (the catechumens) assembled with the faithful for a service preliminary to the four-fold sacrificial action and were then dismissed before the action began. Most of the elements of this preliminary part of the rite (the Kyrie, the Gloria and the Collect) were developments. We now come to an element of the Mass of the Catechumens which was always to be found in the rite—the readings from Holy Scripture.

In the earliest days, as soon as the celebrant and his attendants had entered the church, while the people sang the Introit psalm, a series of Scripture readings was immediately begun. Originally there seems to have been no uniformity in their number. The absence of other elements here gave time for a number of passages to be read. Their primary purpose was the instruction of the catechumens, as their name, "lessons", indicates. They also served to keep the faithful constantly reminded of the truths of the faith which are so firmly grounded in Holy Scripture.

With the appearance of other elements in this part of the rite, the number of lessons tended to decrease, until by the third century there were universally three: one from the Old Testament, one from Apostolic writings (called the Epistle) and one from one of the four gospels. By the end of the sixth century the number had been re-

duced to two by the dropping of the Old Testament lesson, although in many instances it was the Epistle which was dropped and the Old Testament lesson which was retained. In traditional Western missals, there are still remnants of the earlier usages in the three lessons on Ember Wednesdays and the seven lessons on Ember Saturdays.

Because this custom of reading Scripture lessons was borrowed directly from the Jewish synagogue services, the lessons seem never to have been read in a speaking voice, but sung to simple chant tones. There is no evidence of the lessons ever having been read in a speaking voice anywhere in the Church until the middle ages when Low Mass developed, which used no music at all.

Very early, the last of the lessons (the Gospel) became surrounded by ceremonies which set it apart from the others. In this lesson Christ himself speaks to mankind and its special sacredness was emphasized in every way possible. The deacon who was to read it had a special prayer for worthiness and received a blessing from the celebrant. It was preceded by a procession bearing lights and incense. The people stood at attention and, as the deacon announced the lesson and again when he had completed it, they cried out a response of praise. At its announcement, the people also made the sign of the cross on forehead, lips and breast, a kind of acted prayer that God would purify mind, lips and heart to receive Christ's words. The very book out of which the Gospels were read came to be held in special reverence and it was brought to the celebrant to be kissed at the end of the lesson. All of these ceremonies, which survive today at High Mass, made

the reading of the last of the Scripture lessons the great ceremonial climax of the Mass of the Catechumens.

It was the custom in the Jewish synagogues to sing psalms, with added alleluia verses, between the lessons and this custom was taken over by Christianity with the lessons. So in all rites in Christendom, the Epistle is followed by a psalm (called in the West the "Gradual"). The form of the Gradual today is determined by the elaborate melodies to which it has always been sung and by the season of the year, which also has considerable effect upon it. In Lent and at Requiems the "alleluia" disappears entirely and is replaced by a psalm called the "Tract." On five occasions a hymn called the "Sequence" is part of the Gradual.

Originally there was certainly some sort of system to the lessons by which the Bible was regularly read through. Due to the early and obscure developments in the lessons, it is impossible to reconstruct this system today, but the lessons for the Sundays in our Prayer Book are largely those which have become associated with the different Sundays throughout the Western Church, although there has been some unfortunate tinkering with the traditional lessons, especially in our American Prayer Book. No Anglican Prayer Book has ever printed the traditional Graduals, which are one of the original elements of the Christian liturgy. This is due, no doubt, to the fact that, for some unknown reason, the first English Prayer Book expressly forbade any sort of a hymn here. Our American Book, however, has restored reference to the Gradual in the rubric after the Epistle: "Here may be sung a Hymn or an Anthem." It is usual in parishes which seek to restore

ancient customs, to sing the Gradual at High Mass and to read it at Low Mass.

Whatever their history, the Scripture readings still stand in the rite as lessons to be learned. Be attentive to them. Especially in the Holy Gospel, try to think of Christ himself, speaking to you his timeless words.

9. THE CREED AND SERMON

THE CREED HAD no place in any of the early Mass rites. It belonged to Baptism rather than to the Eucharist. As men and women came into Christianity from paganism, their new status in life was symbolized by the acceptance of the Christian faith and the statement of faith which we know as the "Apostles' Creed" was originally the declaration made by converts in Rome just before they were baptized. Very soon, however, disputes arose about the faith within the Church and a series of councils was held to determine the truth. Perhaps the greatest of these councils was that of Nicea in 325, called to combat the heresy of Arius, who denied that our Lord was actually the Second Person of the Trinity. In order to make the Church's teaching clear, the council expanded the old baptismal creed and made it more precise in regard to the dogmas which had been questioned. Thus, whereas the Apostles' Creed had been a test for converts from paganism, the Nicene Creed was a statement of the Church's faith for Christians and distinguished true Christianity from the misbelief of heretics within the Church.

Very soon we find the Nicene Creed used in the course

of the liturgy here and there in communities which had been plagued by heresy. It seems natural that, under these circumstances, Christians should have declared their allegiance to the Church's teaching at their main act of worship. The first reference to the use of the Creed at Mass in the West is in 589, when the Council of Toledo ordered it to be said just before the communion in the Mass, in order to fortify those who had recently been converted from Arianism.

It was not until the eleventh century, however, that the use of the Creed became normal in the Western rite. (This is why there is no musical setting of the Creed earlier than this century.) Even then it was adopted rather half-heartedly and never became an invariable element of the rite. Like the Gloria in excelsis, it was used as a kind of decoration on special occasions. So today the Creed is added to the rite on Sundays and greater feasts. It is also used on the feasts of saints who are called "doctors;" i.e., men who by their writings expounded and defended the faith which the creeds set forth. In introducing this new element into the rite, it was natural that it should be placed at the end of the Mass of the Catechumens, when there was a natural break in the service.

For centuries there was only one musical setting for the Creed and, whatever music was used for other parts of the rite, it was always sung to the same melody, which all knew and in which all could participate. This was surely ideal and it seems a pity that later composers tampered with this universal custom by writing other music to the words of the Creed. In many parishes among us there has been a return to the traditional use in this regard and the

people all have a part in the statement of the faith. But it always seems difficult to restrain choirs from singing other, more showy music here.

The Prayer Book has two rubrics of great importance after the Creed. The first requires that public announcements regarding the life of the congregation be made, including the announcement of holy days and fasting days falling in the ensuing week. The Prayer Book is based entirely on the tradition of Christianity through the ages that the principal act of worship is the Eucharist. It takes for granted that this is the service at which all members of the congregation will be present, and thus provides that any important announcements regarding the life of the Christian community shall be made only in the course of the Eucharist. To substitute any other service as the main act of worship on a Sunday is wholly outside of the view of the Christian life as it is taught by the Book of Common Prayer.

The other important rubric requires that the sermon be preached here. (Again it is to be noted that there is no such provision in Morning Prayer or any other regular service. In the Prayer Book, the Eucharist is the main Sunday service and the Sunday sermon is to be preached during its course.) This rubric is regularly ignored on weekdays as well as at Low Masses celebrated at any early hour on Sundays. Actually the concern of the Prayer Book rite is to provide for the main public service on Sundays and on some of the greater feasts; i.e. those days for which it provides a proper Collect, Epistle and Gospel. At other times it is necessary to make adaptations.

It is to be noted that the preaching of a sermon was

always a part of the Mass of the Catechumens. When the lessons had been read, the celebrant expounded and interpreted them to the people. This was an important element of the early Mass rites and, when the sermon was over, the catechumens, as well as those under penitential discipline, were dismissed, leaving the faithful alone before the altar to offer the Sacrifice, which was then begun immediately.

10. THE OFFERTORY

We have now come to the point in the rite where the actual Sacrifice begins. All that has gone before has no actual relation to the Eucharistic action. It is a service of prayer and instruction, complete in itself which, as we have seen, originated in the early Christian discipline of excluding all but communicants from participation in the Eucharistic act. This first part of the rite provided a service for those who, while not yet baptized and confirmed, were preparing to become Christians. When their service was over, they withdrew and left only the faithful before the altar to offer the Sacrifice. By the time this discipline was relaxed and the catechumens were no longer excluded, the rite had become so settled in its two parts that it never altered its form in this regard.

In our preliminary considerations we learned that the Eucharist is fundamentally an action which, at all times and in all places has been made up of four distinct acts: 1. Offertory; 2. the Eucharistic Prayer; 3. Breaking the Bread; 4. Communion. It is a common error to think of

the placing of the bread and wine on the altar as preliminary to the sacrificial action. Actually it is traditionally a necessary element in the Sacrifice and constitutes the first of its four acts.

The Offertory is introduced by two things. First there is the mutual salutation between the celebrant and people ("The Lord be with you" &c.). While this salutation is absent from our Prayer Book rite, this exchange of greetings is of the utmost importance because it introduces a vital act and serves to unite priest and people in its performance. The mutual greeting here is also one of the most ancient customs in the Christian Mass rite and was certainly a part of the Mass from the very beginning. The "Let us pray" which follows the greeting marks the place of an offertory prayer which developed out of the rite at an early date. The bidding was apparently retained in order to indicate that the offertory itself is an act of prayer.

The second introductory act is the reading or singing of a verse of Scripture called the "Offertory." This custom is comparatively late. It is the remnant of a long psalm which was sung while the people made their offerings and which has now become shortened into a single verse. The Prayer Book prints fourteen verses here, to be said at the discretion of the celebrant. Unfortunately all but one of them refer to the collection of money made at this point, and many priests today prefer to use the traditional proper verses which, like the collect, are assigned to the day or feast.

In early days the Offertory was marked by movement on the part of everyone. (Even today there is more move-

ment at this point in the rite than at any other.) Each member of the congregation came to Mass bearing his own bit of bread and small flask of wine. As soon as the Offertory began, each came forward to lay his own offering of bread on a linen cloth and to pour his flask of wine into the cup. When all had made their offering, the deacons bore it to the celebrant, who offered it on the altar. Today the people no longer bring their own bread and wine, but the Prayer Book has a remnant of the older use in collecting the people's offerings of money at this point and then bringing them to the altar. By some curious misunderstanding of the meaning of this custom, it has become usual in many places to bring money collected at other services to the altar and this has served to obscure the meaning of the custom at Mass. Bringing offerings to the altar at other services is not mentioned anywhere in the Prayer Book and it is done only in defiance of the whole history which lies behind the Prayer Book direction that the collection be brought to the altar at Mass.

While the Prayer Book directs that the celebrant shall "offer" the bread and wine before placing them on the altar, it gives no prayers by which the offering is made, and it is usual for priests to use the set of secret prayers which has grown up around the offering in the Western Church. At High Mass the offering, the priest and people are incensed during the offertory (all have a vital part in this act of offering) and at its end the celebrant rinses his fingers. This latter custom was never utilitarian, as some have supposed, for it was the deacons, not the celebrant, who handled the people's offerings. Rather it is a ceremonial action which symbolizes the purity with which we

must approach the altar. References to it are found in very early documents, and it may well be that it was copied directly from the use of our Lord himself at the Last Supper. Ceremonial washings of this kind were a prominent part of all Jewish life.

The Prayer Book rite closes the Offertory by a longish prayer of intercession. The prayer begins with a petition that God will accept the offering and then expands into prayers for the Church, for Christian Rulers, for the Ministry, for the Congregation, for the Tempted and Tried, and for the Departed. The prayer serves to reach out to all men and to bring them around the altar as we go on with the Sacrifice. It stands in our rite in the place of the Western "Secret Prayer" which is a short, variable collect, never said aloud, and which, in terse language, brings the whole Offertory into the atmosphere of the day or feast.

The Prayer Book bidding of this prayer is simply, "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church." Traditionally the ancient "Orate, fratres" and its response by the people, was the bidding here and the recovery of the latter is growing among us. The priest turns to the people and says: "Brethren, pray: that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty;" to which the people respond: "The Lord receive this sacrifice at thy hands, to the praise and glory of his Name; both to our benefit and that of all his holy Church." Nothing could so perfectly emphasize the unity which exists between priest and people in the offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice and no prayer ever put more succinctly the meaning of the offering as does the response.

There follows in the Prayer Book rite a set of devotions in preparation for Holy Communion—an Invitation to Communion, a General Confession, a General Absolution, and the so-called "Comfortable Words." This is one of the most glaring displacements in our rite. The devotions here cut off the first act of the Sacrifice from its second act and their presence here is one of the reasons why it is so difficult for Anglicans to understand the steady flow of the Eucharistic action. Devotions of this sort were usual in the late medieval Church and are in the realm of subjective, private emotions rather than the realm of the corporate action of the liturgy. No early rite had anything comparable to them as a part of its structure and, if all Christianity found them unnecessary for 1500 years, it is questionable whether they are necessary today. If they are to be used, however, they should not be allowed to interrupt the flow of the liturgy. Their logical place would be at the time of Communion where they appeared in the first English rites. This is why parish after parish today transfers these devotions to Communion-time. Up to our last revision of the Prayer Book another, much longer exhortation preceded the one beginning, "Ye who do truly and earnestly repent you, &c." and the rubric required that this long exhortation be used on at least one Sunday a month. But it had become so customary to omit it that the revisers removed its obligation entirely. It is to be hoped that by the time the Prayer Book rite is again revised, the present devotions will be so widely used in their logical place, that they will be moved there officially, if they are not dropped entirely. If no one is to receive Holy Communion excepting the celebrant, the devotions

are omitted, according to their rubrics which clearly state that they have to do only with "those who come to receive Holy Communion."

The Offertory, then, is the initial movement in the sacrificial action, and its starting-place. It is Godward in its direction. The people offer something to God and that something has always been bread and wine. Bread and wine are created things and they are to be thought of as symbolizing ourselves, our souls and bodies, our lives, abilities, our productivity and our possessions. Fundamentally the action of the Offertory is that of each person giving himself to God under the symbols of bread and wine. It is an act of self-sacrifice. So St. Augustine writes: "There you are, offered upon the Table." As you participate in this first movement of the Christian Sacrifice, try to make the offering of yourself as perfect and as full as you can. Only thus will the action of the Mass be fruitful in your life.

11. THE PREFACE AND CANON

In our last chapter we considered the first of the four actions which have always constituted the offering of the Christian Sacrifice. We now come to the second of those actions—the Eucharistic prayer.

In the first centuries of the Church's life, this was the only prayer in the course of the whole liturgy and it was also the only part of the rite that was performed exclusively by the celebrant. If we look back to the Mass of the Catechumens, we shall notice that its elements were car-

ried out by others—deacons, readers, singers, &c. And the first act of the Sacrifice (the Offertory) involved everyone present. Because they involved cooperation between a number of people, these actions tended to become settled very early. They were written down and we have quite specific information about them. The Eucharistic prayer, on the other hand, was the special "liturgy" (or work) of the celebrating bishop. He had entire freedom in phrasing it and it thus varied considerably from Church to Church. This accounts for the fact that we have very scant evidence of the content of the prayer during the first three centuries. It is remarkable, however, that the evidence we do have shows that behind the varied language, the different order of ideas, &c., the meaning which the different prayers states is always the same in essentials. As time went on, the prayers tended to become stereotyped and were written down. They still varied from place to place and today the Eucharistic prayer is one of the most variable elements in the different rites.

One element in the prayer which seems always to have been universal is that it was prefaced by a dialogue between the celebrant and the people. Part of this dialogue can be traced directly to forms used by the Jews of our Lord's time at ceremonial meals and may well have been part of the proceedings at the Last Supper. The dialogue in our Prayer Book rite ("Lift up your hearts &c.") is almost identical with that in third century documents, excepting that it omits the introductory greeting ("The Lord be with you, &c.") which was always an invariable part of the preface. This is restored in common use among us today and, strangely enough, while it is omitted in the Mass rite,

it is part of the preface which introduces the blessing of the font at baptism.

In most rites, the last response ("It is meet and right so to do") was picked up by the celebrant and expanded into a section in which thanksgiving was rendered to God for specified gifts. This is the "giving of thanks" which has always been an important element of "doing" what Christ did in the Upper Room. One of the peculiarities of the rite of Rome was a "proper preface" inserted here on special days, which gave thanks for the particular events being celebrated. Our rite has shortened this thanksgiving section of the preface to a mere sentence, but it follows the Roman use of providing proper prefaces for particular occasions.

The usual preface closed with a section expressing the truth that our earthly praise is part of the worship of heaven and that, in our worship, we participate in the action of "Angels and Archangels and . . . all the company of heaven." This idea led to a repetition of the words Isaiah heard when he experienced the vision of heavenly life—"Holy, holy, holy, &c." At some point in history, dramatic force was added to these words by the custom of the people joining in saying them. The Sanctus appears in our Prayer Book in a mutilated form in that it omits the phrase: "Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Hosannah in the highest." This phrase is a part of the Sanctus in every known rite in Christendom except a single, very obscure one. The first English Prayer Book had the entire Sanctus and most parishes today use it in its traditional form. The chant of the preface is one of the most ancient bits of music in common use today and is

used only in the Mass preface and in those parts of the Holy Week rite which are cast in the preface form; viz. the blessing of palms, the "Exsultet," and the blessing of the font.

Its preface completed, the Eucharistic prayer is begun by the celebrant. It is called the "canon" (test or criterion) because it is of the very essence of the Sacrifice. Our Prayer Book canon is largely that composed for the first English Prayer Book by Archbishop Cranmer. It is based upon the canon used continuously in the Western Church from the sixth century (and still used in the Roman Church today). The pivot of the prayer is the narrative of what was said and done by Christ at the Last Supper, which is our whole authority for performing the Eucharistic action. It then proceeds in a series of prayers: a prayer of offering the "holy gifts" to the Father, while making "remembrance" of Christ's life, death and resurrection; a prayer of invocation of the Holy Ghost; a prayer that we may receive the benefits of the offering; a prayer for those who will receive Holy Communion; and, finally, a prayer that the Father will accept the offering. The prayer ends, as all Eucharistic prayers in Christendom, with a "doxology," i.e. an act of glorifying the Name of God.

It is in the course of this prayer that the mighty mystery of transformation is accomplished and God the Holy Ghost makes the bread and wine to be the Body and Blood of the Risen, Ascended Christ. This Christian truth, which is of the essence of the Eucharist, is no modern invention. It is plainly stated by writers of the second century, men who lived at the same time as some of Christ's Apostles. So, in this century, Justin writes:

"The food which has been made Eucharist is the Flesh and Blood of that Jesus who was made flesh." Hippolytus writes that the Blessed Sacrament reserved between Masses "is the Body of Christ." Irenaeus writes: "The cup and the bread receive the Word of God and become the Body and Blood of Christ." The Eucharistic prayer in our Prayer Book rite is based securely upon the teaching of Christianity from the very beginning when it calls the Blessed Sacrament "the most precious Body and Blood of . . . Jesus Christ."

The elevation of the Host and Chalice immediately after their consecration is a comparatively modern Western custom. It arose out of a necessity to combat heresies which denied our Lord's real, objective presence in the Blessed Sacrament. These heresies are by no means dead today and there is still a great need to emphasize the Church's teaching in every way possible. The primary purpose of the elevation is that the faithful may see the Blessed Sacrament. When it is lifted up, look up and adore your Lord and your God.

Another comparatively late custom is the ringing of the bell during the prayer. This custom is entirely utilitarian and has no mystical significance. If we were perfect, we should be able to concentrate upon our prayers and worship without our minds wandering. Being what we are, wandering thoughts constantly plague us. The Church is always entirely realistic in her treatment of her children and the bell simply calls us to attention when important things are to take place. Incidentally, it ought not to be necessary to remind Churchmen that the bell is a signal for quiet and silence, but even so clear a signal does not

always bring some to attention and one sometimes hears rustling and movement even during the consecration itself.

The movement of the Eucharistic action begins with the offering of bread and wine to God, which symbolizes our offering of ourselves. From this starting point, the action moves forward in a mighty surge, through the canon preceded by its preface. This movement is signalized by the fact that traditionally the celebrant does not turn to the people for the greeting at the beginning of the preface. The flow of the action is forward and the celebrant, with the people close behind, presses onward in the power of our Lord's Sacrifice. Thus he does not stop and turn around, but calls his exhortations, as it were, over his shoulder while still moving forward. Always try at Mass to be a real part of this surge of forward movement in the rite—onward and upward to God.

12. THE FRACTION

In the earliest liturgies, the third movement of the Eucharistic action—the breaking of the Bread—followed immediately after the doxology which ended the celebrant's prayer. The order of the four acts, which constitute the Christian Sacrifice, sometimes appears strange, for it is not the order of the New Testament accounts of the Last Supper. In the New Testament, the order is: breaking, blessing and receiving the Bread; blessing and receiving the Cup. It is well to remember that, when the New Testament accounts were written, the Eucharist had

been celebrated for some years. The evidence we have of the primitive rites proves conclusively that the order of the acts was always: Offering, the Prayer (in which the bread and cup were blessed); Breaking the Bread; Communion. Whatever the reason for the discrepancy here, the liturgical order as we know it is older than the New Testament accounts of the Last Supper.

It is probable that the liturgical order arose from the necessities of a simple, continuing action which would include all that was done in the Upper Room. Certainly the breaking of the Bread, while it was one of our Lord's acts and thus a necessary part of the Eucharistic action, was a practical necessity. A single loaf was blessed and it had to be broken for distribution. Thus the logical place for the breaking was between the prayer and the Communion.

As the Church grew, and Communions multiplied, this element in the rite became a rather time-consuming procedure and the custom developed of the celebrant breaking only one particle for his own Communion, while the deacons broke the rest. When it became customary for all to bring their own bits of bread for their share in the Offertory, there was no longer a necessity of breaking all the particles and, before long, the fraction was confined to the celebrant's particle. It was then only a step to our present custom of providing small breads, ready for the Communion of the people, and one larger bread for the celebrant, which is the only one actually broken at the fraction.

While the fraction was originally utilitarian, it naturally lent itself to symbolic explanations and, as early as the

second century, Christians saw in the breaking of the Bread a dramatic setting forth of the death of our Lord. Also the fraction was always the point in the liturgy which offered the most opportunity for symbolic ceremonies and, by the fourth century, a most elaborate ceremonial had been developed in the East which called for various, complicated arrangements of the broken particles. The West never adopted these elaborate ceremonies and the fraction, while always a solemn moment in the rite, was carried out with comparative simplicity.

One custom connected with the fraction was adopted in the West and is still in general use: *viz.* the placing of a small broken particle of the Host in the chalice at this point. This custom is found as early as the fifth century in the East and is explained by Theodore of Mopsuestia in that century as follows: "To show that they are not separable, that they are one in power and that they vouchsafe the same grace to those who receive them." The roots of this custom are probably to be found in two ancient practices which have long since disappeared. The first was called the "fermentum." With the growth of Christianity, it became necessary to erect more than one church in a city and the bishop had to authorize priests to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice in the lesser churches. To show that the Sacrifice offered by the priest was the same as that offered by the bishop, a fragment broken from the Host consecrated at the bishop's Mass (a "fermentum") was brought to the church where the priest was celebrant, and placed in the chalice at the fraction. The other practice was connected with the "sanctum," which was a fragment of the Host reserved from the bread consecrated

at the last Mass in a church and placed in the chalice at this point to show that the Eucharistic Sacrifice is always one. While these practices developed out of the rite centuries ago, they still influence present-day practice in this custom of placing a small fragment of the Host in the chalice at the fraction.

The insertion of the Lord's Prayer between the Eucharistic prayer and the fraction seems to have begun in Jerusalem in the fourth century. It came into Western use via the African Church and is found in the Roman rite by the sixth century. It is a very good example of the way one rite has always borrowed from another all through history. The custom of the people joining in the recitation of this prayer is found nowhere in the West excepting in our American Church where it is done despite the fact that there is no rubric authorizing it. The universal Western custom here is for the celebrant to say the prayer alone through "Lead us not into temptation," to which the people respond, "But deliver us from evil." The first English Prayer Book followed this traditional custom and it is usual in many parishes among us today.

All prayer books of the Anglican Communion follow the English Book of 1662 in regard to the fraction, which made the serious liturgical blunder of transferring it to the middle of the Eucharistic prayer. The error was due to the difficulties experienced in the Church of England in the seventeenth century which are too complicated to consider here. But this displacing of the fraction serves to obscure its original purpose and to destroy its original character as one of the great successive acts in the fourfold action of the Eucharist. Here is another place where

liturgical development is going on in Anglicanism today, for more and more parishes are regularly restoring this action to its traditional place. And it is noteworthy that, without exception, all the suggested rites which have been published in recent years by people of every shade of churchmanship, call for the fraction before the Communion.

In doing what Christ did at the Last Supper, the Church breaks the Bread. Originally this was a utilitarian act, necessary for communion, but it has gathered around itself symbolism of deep significance. Christ's holy Body was broken in his Passion. So we who have made ourselves an offering to God in the Offertory and have surged forward in the worship of the great prayer, bring to the altar the little hurts and wounds which we have sustained from God's enemies in our life of sacrifice. We endure as part of him who endured the Cross and thus are part of his mighty Sacrifice. And this, like the fraction, is our preparation for taking his glorified life into ourselves in Communion.

13. THE COMMUNION

WE HAVE COME to the fourth, and final action of the Eucharistic Sacrifice—the Communion. Understanding of this element of the Eucharist has been rendered extremely difficult today by the widespread teaching of the Protestant sects that Communion is the only essential act in following our Lord's command, "Do this." In most of Protestant theology and practice, it makes no difference whether

there are any other acts or not, so long as people receive bread and wine (or bread and some substitute for wine) in remembrance of Christ. This teaching has had considerable effect upon the belief of many Anglicans, and the error is made easier for us by our unfortunate habit of referring to the Eucharistic action as "The Holy Communion," as though Communion were the sum of it all rather than one of its acts.

If we have learned anything from these instructions, we know that, from the days of our Lord's Apostles, following the command, "Do this," has always been accomplished by Christianity in four acts, all equally essential, of which Communion is only one. What we receive in Holy Communion has been first offered, taken into heaven by prayer, and broken. Even when we receive Holy Communion apart from Mass, what we receive has been a part of this four-fold action and thus Communion from the reserved Sacrament is not Communion completely separated from the rest of the acts.

We have seen that, in the earliest days, no one was allowed to be present during the Eucharistic action except those who were communicants in good standing, and in those days, as far as we know, all present received Communion. To be present was to partake of the Sacred Gifts. Soon, however, this old discipline became relaxed, and the unbaptized, as well as those under temporary excommunication, remained in the church for the Mass of the Faithful. One of the effects of this change in custom was that Christians became accustomed to having a large number of people at Mass who did not receive Communion. As Christianity grew and persecution ceased, the early en-

thusiasm of Christians cooled somewhat, and more and more of the baptized stopped receiving Communion on every Sunday and holy day. They still regularly participated in the Eucharistic action (no Christian before 1500 A.D. ever thought he could remain apart from the obedient action of the Body of Christ and still be a loyal follower of our Lord) but they did not always make a sacramental Communion.

This constituted a serious lowering of ideals, but it developed to such an extent that, in medieval times, Christians received Holy Communion only once or twice a year. This is still the normal thing in the Eastern Churches. For the past three centuries, in most provinces of the Western Church, there have been movements for more frequent communion and these movements have been successful to a considerable degree. The low ideal of communion only on Christmas and Easter is still all too prevalent among Anglicans, however, and it is to our shame that so many of our people have added a further step downward by the custom of so-called Christians wilfully refusing to participate in the Eucharistic action at all excepting on those infrequent occasions when they receive Holy Communion.

Through all of this development, bad as it has been, the Church has insisted upon the necessity of Communion as one of the elements of the Eucharistic action and has made it sure by the age-old principle that the celebrant must receive Holy Communion at every Mass which he offers. This rule is specific in the rubric of the Prayer Book rite, which requires: "Then shall the Priest first receive the holy Communion in both kinds himself."

A word must be said here about the custom in many of our parishes of offering the Sacrifice without giving the people an opportunity to receive Holy Communion. No one supposes this to be ideal and we would all prefer to be rid of it. We must, however, deal realistically with a situation which is caused by the fact that so few people understand or pay attention to the teaching of the Church as contained in the Book of Common Prayer. In the first place, the Prayer Book states: ". . . there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed." This discipline requires instruction and the Sacrament of Confirmation as a preparation for Communion. In the second place, the Prayer Book stresses, probably more forcibly than any other single subject, the necessity of careful preparation for Communion on the part of the faithful: ". . . For as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament; so is the danger great, if we receive the same unworthily. . . . . Which being so divine and comfortable a thing to them who receive it worthily, and so dangerous to those who will presume to receive it unworthily; my duty is to exhort you . . . to consider the dignity of that holy mystery, and the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof . . . for otherwise the receiving of the holy Communion doth nothing else but increase your condemnation."

These terrible warnings, however, are not understood or taken very seriously by many Christians and it is the duty of the Church, not only to exhort, but to take whatever steps are necessary to protect people from this

spiritual danger. There is not much difficulty about thoughtless Communions at Masses offered early in the morning, for the thoughtless are not likely to be out of bed then (unless it is to make money on a job or to experience pleasure on an outing). When Mass is said at a late hour, however, the thoughtless, as well as the unconfirmed, are often present and experience proves that, if the faithful come forward to make their Communions, some sudden emotion is likely to move these others to come forward too. Thus, as long as we must face this situation, it seems best not to administer Holy Communion at all in Masses offered at a late hour. Actually this is no deprivation to the faithful, for the parishes which follow this custom are invariably the parishes which offer the most opportunities for Holy Communion.

Two somewhat late developments are to be found in the traditional Western rite in connection with the time of Communion. One is the "Agnus Dei" ("O Lamb of God, &c.") which is an act of adoration of the Christ who is on the altar in the guise of a Sacrifice. The Agnus came gradually into use during the fourth century and is especially appropriate at this point of the rite.

The other development is the psalm verse called the "Communion" which is now read or sung after the Communion. This is the remnant of a long psalm which was sung while the people received Holy Communion. Like the Offertory sentence, which became shortened to a single verse when the people no longer came forward with their offerings, this psalm lost all but its first verse (or sometimes its antiphon) when the people generally no longer came forward to receive Holy Communion.

Neither the "Agnus Dei" nor the "Communion verse" appear in our rite, but it is usual to supply them at this point. The bell is rung thrice just before the celebrant's communion to remind the faithful that the fourth essential element of the Sacrifice is about to take place. This bell is also a signal for intending communicants to come forward to the altar rail. If no one approaches the altar at this time, the celebrant will think there are to be no Communions, so do not ignore the summons of this bell when you expect to communicate.

In the traditional Western rites, the pax (or kiss of peace) precedes the Communion at High Mass. This is one of the most ancient ceremonies of the rite and is referred to by St. Paul in ii Corinthians and i Timothy, and by St. Peter in his first Epistle. Originally it seems to have been the mutual greeting between the faithful which began the Mass of the Faithful, as soon as the catechumens had left. It was moved to this appropriate position in connection with the Communion in the fourth century. The versicle: "The peace of the Lord be always with you," and its response: "And with thy spirit," are part of the pax, but remain in the rite at all Masses, even though the pax is not actually given.

The Communion is God's response to our action in the Eucharist. We offer ourselves under the symbols of bread and wine at the Offertory and bear our offering into heaven itself by the power of Christ's Sacrifice in the great Eucharistic prayer. We show forth the Lord's death, and our own participation in his sacrificial life and death, in the fraction. Then God responds by pouring the victorious life of Christ into us at the Communion. The emphasis

here is not, as at the Offertory, upon what we do, but upon what God does. As we have given ourselves to God under the forms of bread and wine, he gives himself to us under the same forms. The direction of the Communion is manward. Whatever we give up to God is never lost to us. He takes what we give into his hands, adds his mighty life to it and gives it back so that it is adequate for us to use in doing his will. This is the meaning of the Eucharist. With the Communion, the rite has come to its climax.

14. THE CONCLUSION OF THE RITE

ALL THE EARLY liturgies ended with the Communion, without any further prayers or devotions. First the vessels were carefully cleansed and put away. Then a single sentence of dismissal closed the service. The Communion is the climax of the Eucharistic action and the early Christians found no necessity for prolonging the rite after the climax had been reached. That the cleansing of the vessels (called later, the "ablutions") was performed before the people left, is characteristic of the way the early Christians regarded the Mass. It is a homely action, very like washing dishes after an ordinary meal but to the early Christian, no detail of the rite was too homely to be accounted unfitting at the gathering of the household of God.

In the fourth century, however, a short act of corporate thanksgiving for Communion began to creep into the rite. It began, as most of the early developments, in the East

but was soon borrowed by the West. In the West it took the form of a very short collect which varied with the season and corresponded to the collect before the lessons in the Mass of the Catechumens. It is noteworthy that the composition of these "post-communion collects" seems to have been given much less attention than that of the collects, a fact which even a cursory examination will prove. This little prayer of thanksgiving was inserted before the dismissal, but it was not said until the ablutions had been performed. Thus the Church marked off the Apostolic core of the Eucharist from all later devotional additions in a simple, yet most effective way.

The dismissal itself was given by a deacon and was part of every rite from Apostolic times. In the West it took the form of a Latin idiom, "Ite missa est," which cannot be accurately translated into another language. It is usual among us to use the phrase, "Depart in peace," which conveys something of the same idea as that of the old Latin. On ordinary days and days of fasting, it was not usual for the people to leave the church immediately after the liturgy, so no real dismissal was given. In its place, "Let us bless the Lord," was said. To both the people responded: "Thanks be to God." (In Requiems, a simple prayer for the departed, "May they rest in peace," takes the place of the dismissal, and the people respond, "Amen.") Traditionally the dismissal and its response are sung to the same tone as that used for the Kyrie eleison, thus closing the rite with the same musical theme with which it began.

In the Western rite today, there are two additional items after the dismissal. Both developed very late and, for

this reason, were not allowed to intrude themselves into the old framework of the rite. The first of these is the blessing. The idea of a priest giving a blessing to people who had just received the incalculable blessing of Christ himself in Holy Communion, would probably have shocked the early Christian, and we find nothing like it during the first thousand years. However, it seems to have been customary for the people to bow to the bishop as he passed them in leaving the church after Mass and he responded to this act of courtesy by making the sign of the cross over them. Later a short formula of blessing began to accompany the making of the sign. By the eleventh century, priests were beginning to bless the people at the end of the service, but they did so at the altar, and not while leaving. This reacted upon the bishop's blessing and it, too, came to be given before he left the sanctuary. But even today, only a bishop ever sings this blessing and, when a priest is celebrant, he says it even at Masses which are sung. The old English missals never copied this use of the formal blessing here, and it is somewhat strange that Cranmer included it in his first English rite. That he did so is, of course, the reason why the blessing appears in Anglican rites today. The blessing never came to be added to Requiem Masses and Requiems do not have it to this day.

The other late addition to the Western rite is the "Last Gospel" (St. John i:1-14) said at the Gospel side just before the celebrant leaves the altar. Sometime in the eleventh or twelfth centuries it became the custom for Christians to use this significant bit of Scripture in their private thanksgiving after Communion. Later the cele-

brant seems to have begun his thanksgiving while leaving the altar and this gospel was recited while he walked to the sacristy. By the sixteenth century it was beginning to be said at the altar itself, before the celebrant left. A final development in the Last Gospel has been that when a Sunday (or other day which has a Collect, Epistle and Gospel of its own) is displaced by a feast, the Gospel for the day is substituted for the ordinary Last Gospel so that the people are not deprived entirely of the Church's provision of Scripture for the day.

The section of our Prayer Book rite after Communion has only the thanksgiving prayer and the blessing (plus the misplaced Gloria in excelsis, which we considered in chapter 6). In place of the old variable post-communion collect, our rite has the so-called "Prayer of Thanksgiving" which is a composition of Archbishop Cranmer. It is admirable in its theology, but is very long and involved in its phraseology for use in a Mass rite. Further it does not lend itself well to singing at High Mass. Thus in many places, it is customary to revert to earlier uses and to substitute the shorter, variable collects especially at Masses which are sung. (The Prayer Book of the Church of Scotland, in accordance with earlier Western use, has a proper post-communion prayer for each set of lessons.)

The dismissal, which has been part of every Eucharistic rite from the very beginning, does not appear at all in our rite. The rubric governing the use of the Gloria in excelsis, however, permits the substitution of "some proper Hymn" for the Gloria here, and it is usual, in parishes which have returned the "Angelic Hymn" to its universal place after the Kyrie, to use the dismissal in place

of the Gloria. This is, perhaps, stretching the meaning of the rubric somewhat, but the custom does return to ancient, universal usage, and it is certainly more in accordance with the dignity of the Eucharist to use the dismissal here, than to use a snippet of rather sentimental poetry, as is often done.

The use of the Last Gospel at the altar did not develop in the West until after the first English Prayer Book was published. Thus it could not be included in the first English rite, and little has been added officially to our Anglican rites which did not appear in the 1549 book. However, its use is very general in Anglican parishes throughout the world.

There is no direction whatsoever for ablutions in our rite, but it is almost universal among us to cleanse the vessels at the altar. A strange misunderstanding of one of the rubrics at the end of our rite led to a misplacing of the ablutions among us for many years. This rubric directs that, ". . . if any of the consecrated Bread and Wine remain . . . the Minister and other Communicants shall, immediately after the Blessing, reverently eat and drink the same." There is no direction to cleanse the vessels in this rubric. From both its history and its plain wording, the rubric was placed here to guard against any desecration of the Blessed Sacrament by its use as common bread and wine. Its effect is to reinforce the teaching of the whole rite that the Risen Christ is really and objectively present on the altar under the forms of bread and wine. Its first clause ("If any . . . remain") presupposes that, under usual circumstances, none will remain to be consumed in this manner. But Anglicans generally seem to have

misread the meaning and language of this rubric and accordingly supposed that the Prayer Book directed that the ablutions be made after the blessing. Thus it became customary to take ablutions in this place instead of in their ancient position which, as we have seen, indicates clearly the old climax of the rite. A better understanding of the rubric now prevails, however, and the common use throughout Anglicanism is to make the ablutions where they logically and traditionally belong. When this is done, none of the "consecrated Bread and Wine remain" and there is no need to do anything about this rubric.